

# ESSAY

## Introduction

Alan Anderson, President and Alec Anderson, Vice-President, have been very active in supporting recognition ceremonies for Veterans both living and dead especially through close involvement in two national holiday programs—Veterans’ Day and Memorial Day.

## Memorial Day Celebration

Memorial Day, formerly known as Decoration Day, is a United States federal holiday observed on the last Monday of May. It began in 1865 as a tradition of decorating soldiers’ graves to honor Union soldiers of the American Civil War. By the early 1900's it became an occasion for a more general expression of memory as ordinary people visited the graves of their deceased relatives wishing to remember and honor all loved ones.

Memorial Day is one of the holidays celebrated in American Fork by public events and ceremony. For many years a memorial service has been held at the American Fork Cemetery. Alan Anderson, President of Anderson & Sons Mortuary, was an active member of the American Fork Cemetery Committee for 20 years. In 1998, Alec Anderson, Vice President of Anderson & Sons Mortuary, became a member of the committee. In 2008 Alec served as President of the American Fork Cemetery Committee and in 2010 was the chairman of the services held at the American Fork Cemetery. Alec and his committee were asked to invite participants and put on the program. Alec was asked to read the honor role names as flags were presented for of the fallen soldiers.

The special and new project this year for the Anderson & Sons Mortuary was to provide bottles of water to those attending. The significance of this gesture is that the meeting is always held outdoors in the cemetery in the sun. The mortuary owns a 1931 four door convertible Model “A” Ford. This car has been in the business for eight years and is a symbol around town of the mortuary. The spare tire on the rear of the car has a tire cover with “Anderson & Sons Mortuary est. 1866.” printed on it. The car is definitely a treasure to the community. When it is out in public, it is surrounded by children and adults, especially old-timers who know its true value because the car is totally original, engine and all.

At the back of the car there was a poster 20" x 28" mounted on a stake that was driven into the ground. It had banner with the lettering that read, “**Water**” in large bold letters and then compliments of Anderson & Sons Mortuary. The water bottles were in a large cooler with ice.

The water was very appreciated and gone at the end of the ceremony. The Mayor noted the generous gesture of kindness and thanked Anderson & Sons Mortuary publicly from the microphone. This idea came from suggestions and ideas motivated by participation in the “Pursuit of Excellence” program.

Anderson & Sons Mortuary participated in the Memorial Day Firemen’s breakfast as well. Alan Anderson who joined the volunteer Firemen in 1970 has flipped pancakes at nearly every

Memorial Day breakfast since he joined the Fire Department. Many families from the community attend this annual affair and have a chance to talk to Alan and kid him. This is very good publicity for the business and very good public relations in an informal setting where people are able to joke and laugh.

During the breakfast there is a sign posted at the front of the mortuary parking lot across the street from the fire station inviting the public to enjoy free parking. This has created very positive community involvement as well.

### Veterans' Day Program

World War I involved 35 countries. When the fighting was over, leaders of countries signed an Armistice on the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month. A day was set aside to remember the sacrifices made during World War I and was called Armistice Day. Wars continued and in 1954 President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a bill proclaiming November 11<sup>th</sup> each year as Veterans' Day to recognize all veterans of foreign wars.

American Fork has recognized this day every year and has had a Veterans' Day Memorial program on November 11. The American Fork Cemetery and Cemetery Committee host this annual program. Alec, therefore, has been a major player in its organization and presentation.

Two years ago, Alec with his co-chairman, LaVern Nerdin, felt impressed to pay tribute to the men of the Local Honor Guard. The Veterans of Foreign Wars District 4 Honor Guard includes those men who are the presently active in providing military burial rites for our dying veterans. They continue to serve our nation and communities acting as pallbearers, firing a rifle salute, and folding and presenting a flag to the family of the veteran who has passed.

Alec and LaVern interviewed the veterans and family members. Selected portions of the interviews were written into a script which Alec used to create a DVD with photos of the veterans from their time of service, thru their present service with the Veterans organization.

The original disc was prepared for the 2008 Program, but was played again at the 2009 ceremony and a disc copy was presented to each member of the honor guard at the Veterans Day program for 2009. It was a thrill to see living veterans receiving recognition as well as the fallen heroes from WWI, WWII, the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam War and the War on Terror. The widespread gratitude and compliments from this disc made all of the effort worthwhile.